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C O N F I D E N T I A L MUSCAT 000287

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DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARP AND G/TIP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019-04-06
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KCRM](#) [KTIP](#) [MU](#)
SUBJECT: OMAN ANTI-TRAFFICKING COMMITTEE CONVENES

REF: A) MUSCAT 201; B) 08 MUSCAT 830

CLASSIFIED BY: Gary A. Grappo, Ambassador, U.S. Department of State,
U.S. Embassy - Muscat; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (U) According to local Arabic and English language press reports, Oman's National Committee for Combating Trafficking in Persons (TIP) -- which was established by the Sultanate's comprehensive anti-trafficking law enacted in November 2008 (ref B) -- held its inaugural meeting on April 1, 2009. Senior representatives from the following government ministries and agencies attended: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Legal Affairs, Ministry of Information, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Manpower, Public Prosecution, National Commission for Human Rights, Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Royal Oman Police (ROP). [Note: The names of the individual representatives were not announced. Based upon an examination of a photograph of the committee in the media, post believes that most are Under Secretaries or equivalent in rank. End Note.] The chairman of the committee, ROP Inspector General Lieutenant General Malik bin Suleiman al-Ma'amari, who is also a government minister, presided over the meeting.

¶2. (U) Talking to the press afterwards, al-Ma'amari stated that the committee will have its own "secretariat" and will complete a draft action plan within three months to coordinate national efforts to combat trafficking. He also revealed that there were 11 suspects, seven Omanis and four expatriates, in the first trafficking case being investigated and prosecuted under the Sultanate's new anti-TIP law (ref A). The female victims in this case, he added, were residing and receiving care at an ROP "accommodation center" and were allowed to leave the premises on monitored outings for shopping and entertainment.

¶3. (U) In a separate interview with local, privately-owned Arabic daily "al-Shabiba" concerning the ongoing TIP case, Oman's Attorney General, Hussein bin Ali al-Hilali, stated that Omani and expatriate men were being charged for bringing 16 foreign women into Oman as their wives and then forcing them into prostitution. He also noted that the government was looking into cases of South Asian housemaids being "guided" into prostitution by nationals of their respective countries resident in Oman. The Attorney General further announced that the ROP and Public Prosecutor had established a hot line for Omanis and expatriates to report suspected instances of trafficking.

¶4. (C) Comment: The meeting of the anti-TIP committee and its stated intent to finalize a draft action plan against trafficking are welcome steps forward in Oman's efforts to address this important issue. Al-Ma'amari is a solid choice for committee chairman and can be expected to take the committee's responsibilities seriously. Perhaps even more noteworthy are al-Ma'amari's and al-Hilali's comments to the press. For a country which not that long ago avoided public discussion of TIP in Oman (besides denial of a potential problem), it is rather remarkable that officials are now openly acknowledging the presence of trafficking in the Sultanate. The exact details of the TIP case currently before the courts remain unclear. At least one of the

defendants could be an Omani government employee who issued visas for the female victims brought to Oman as "wives" and later coerced into prostitution. Post was not aware of a new hotline for the reporting of trafficking and has contacted the ROP for further information. End Comment.
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